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EXPLORING CASINO GAMBLING IMPACT PERCEPTIONS: A GENDERED SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies of residents' perceptions and attitudes have been conducted in the field of tourism within the social exchange theory (SET) framework. SET has often been referred to as an appropriate framework for explaining the level of resident support for tourism in their community (Ap, 1992; Caneday & Zeiger, 1991; Perdue et al., 1995, 1999; McGehee & Andereck, 2004). SET stipulates that residents "who perceive they personally benefit from tourism development will support and express positive attitudes towards tourism development" (Lee et al., 2003: 47). However, the majority of the studies focusing on SET have been in the form of snapshots taken of the whole population. While the need for local acceptability and understanding of residents' opinions is universal, a within gender ethnicity perspective of SET is generally lacking in literature. Of the few studies that have explored gaming impact perception differences based on ethnic groups (Ham et al., 2004), a detailed analysis of within gender dynamics in ethnicity is remiss.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate differences in female resident perceptions and attitudes toward a proposed casino based on ethnicity. Additionally, this paper seeks to examine the influence of SET on the subsequent support for tourism development from the gender perspective. The aim is to provide a fresh perspective because the data is anchored in two diverse ethnic populations, thus enabling a within gender analysis among the ethnic groups. Because only a handful studies have appeared that focus on gendered ethnic populations while addressing casino gambling impacts, this study makes an important contribution in the casino gambling literature. In summary, this paper makes use of a dual theory framework: SET and post modernist feminist theory which has been often referred to as gender theory. Gender theory postulates that gender is more than a biological difference and several factors operate within each

gender that determine or guide subsequent attitudes or behavior in leisure (Henderson, 1990; Wearing, 1998). In other words, it emphasizes on pluralism of each sex.

METHODOLOGY

Black and White women residing in the Black Hawk County of Iowa (United States) were the subject of analysis. A preliminary list of measurement items related to residents' perception of casino gambling impacts was initially gleaned from literature review and these were presented on a five-point Likert scale with a typical format of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The list was reviewed by a panel of academics with related expertise and was further refined by pilot testing it on a small sample of local residents. These were intercepted randomly at two geographically dispersed public parks. Factor analysis procedure was used to examine their dimensional validity and inter-correlation (Lee et al. 2003). Data were collected in the Fall of 2004 using brief intercepts with self-administered questionnaires in public areas. Approximately 400 head of the households in residence for a minimum of 5 years were successfully interviewed. The overall response rate was 80%.

Data were analyzed using multiple methods. These included univariate analysis to provide descriptive statistics and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) (with a principal component method with varimax rotation) to detect scale dimensionality. The appropriateness of factor analysis was tested by examining the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity. Reliability analysis of the items was conducted using Cronbach alpha coefficient and through the evaluation of item-to-item correlation scores of the items in each scale (factor analysis). Finally, ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression models examined the within gender effect on support for casino gambling while controlling for age, income, education, and number of children in the household.

FINDINGS

The results indicated striking similarities between the two gender groups with regard to age, total number of members in the household and age of the youngest child. However, differences existed with regard to annual household income, marital status, and education. White women also tended to travel farther to gamble, but their participation rate and percentage income spent on gambling was less than the Blacks. Factor analysis identified six domains: social benefits, social costs, economic benefits, economic costs, environment costs, and infrastructure costs. Black and White females also differed in their perceptions associated with the benefits and costs of the proposed casino development in Black Hawk County. While the Blacks disagreed more than the Whites on social costs and environment costs, no differences were observed on perceptions related to economic benefits and economic costs and infrastructure benefits. In other words, the Black and White females perceived similar benefits with regard to the economy and infrastructure. Finally, significant influence of SET was observed but the magnitude and factors influencing support differed across the two groups. The regression models suggested that cost factors were likely to negatively influence overall support while benefit factors were likely to have a positive impact.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, both the groups perceived similar economic benefits. However, the White women displayed more concern about the costs of the proposed development than their Black counterparts. While significant influence of SET was observed among the two groups, differences existed in the perception domains and their magnitude. The study results have important implications for casino gambling tourism planners and developers as these findings can be utilized to develop communication strategies that deal with specific issues raised by different ethnic groups. The perception ratings indicated concerns of casino gambling impacts by both the ethnic groups. Cost factors need to be addressed to improve local resident perceptions of negative

impacts and because the Blacks and Whites differ in their level of concern for different cost-related items, different strategies need to be designed to attract potential attendance and participation from each group. This will help gain a larger support thereby increasing the chance of success of the proposed development.

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